Zoot Suit Worksheet

1. Describe the *stasis* in the play: where, when, who, what, etc. in a paragraph.

The play is set in Los Angeles during World War II. It follows Henry and the 38th Street Gang as they face murder charges after the Sleepy Lagoon gang fight. The police and justice system discriminate upon the group based upon their appearance (being Chicano and wearing Zoot Suits) and proceed to treat the group as criminals. Outside of the prison the Zoot Suit Riots ensue beyond the view of the main characters, and give more depth to their current situation.

2. What is the *intrusion*?

The intrusion occurs when Alice (the reporter), George (main lawyer) and the other lawyers free the members of the 38th street gang.

3. What is the *unique factor*?

The unique factor is that the work is based upon Chicano people facing discrimination and profiling based on their appearance (Zoot Suit).

4. What is the *dramatic question* that should be answered by the end of the play?

Will Henry and the 38th Street Gang overcome the discrimination and profiling that could possibly incarcerate them for the rest of their natural lives? Or will they overcome and allow Henry to make something out of his life?

5. Identify the most *theatrical moment* in the play and of what importance it seems to be.

The most theatrical moment is when the police are interrogating Henry and they attempt to beat a confession out of him. At this moment Pachuco reminds Henry of the Chicano position in society and how they are discriminated against solely for their appearance and how they dress, but Pachuco encourages Henry to keep his “Chicano” pride and hold strong throughout the ordeal.

6. List some of the *themes* of the play.

-Profiling

-Discrimination

-Racial Identity

7. What does Henry want? How does the playwright resolve his wants at the end of the play? How does this resolution compare with the real Henry, as indicated in the documentary?

Henry wants to make a better life for himself than what he has previously experienced or could possibly face. The play resolves Henry’s path by providing two possible endings. One in which he dies a criminal going in and out of prison, and the other being he dies a hero, dying whilst at war and receiving a honorary medal for his service. However, in the documentary the real Henry dies in a bar after going in and out of prison.

8. Note which version of the play in production you saw (either the DVD version or the HS stage version), then discuss the way the designers move from place to place (scene to scene) and how effectively that is for communicating the dramatic action.

In the DVD the transitions are through music and with the stage slowly rotating to reveal the next scene. This is extremely effective because it makes the work seem more seamless and smooth. In addition, it gives the work a sense of continuity, and that the world in which Henry exists is palpable. With the music transitions, it gives Pachuco the sense of surrealism that his character requires and adds to his sleekness that encompasses his person.

9. Choose a character from the play and discuss how the costume designer has accentuated (focused) the audience attention on that character. What are some of the details of the costume that strike you as interesting or exaggerated.

Pachuco’s black Zoot Suit with his red shirt accent his stylishness, smoothness and sleekness. It also differentiates him from the rest of the characters by giving him a darker tone in his dress that matches his personality and outlook. The scars on his face (whether the actor already had them or they were created with makeup) added to his characterization as weathered and tougher than most of the other younger, fresher faced characters. His slicked back hair also adds to his characters sleek/smoothness making it clear that everything that this character does, he did with a purpose.

10. Lighting plays a big role in the DVD and the staged version by the HS. Discuss the use of light to accentuate characters and scenes, choosing a particular scene from the production to discuss.

During the scene in which Henry is interrogated by the officers the light is squarely upon him and the three officers so that the audience will focus on him, but whenever Pachuco speaks the lighting would shift back to him and the officers would freeze allowing for Henry and Pachuco to exchange ideas. In addition, when Henry was rendered unconscious the light was centered upon him as the other actors paraded around him. Thus grabbing the audience’s attention once more and displaying the importance of the moment that was being displayed.